Democracy and Interests

Trace how U.S. support for democracy has changed over time.

9-12.GOV.59 "Evaluate the changing role of the United States in supporting democratic principles and institutions in the international system."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one U.S. action intended to strengthen democracy in each paragraph. Circle a detail that shows a competing interest or a limit to that effort.

When Ideals Meet Interests

1. After World War II, the United States helped rebuild Western Europe through the Marshall Plan, launched in 1948. The aid supported economic recovery in countries where democratic governments could gain strength. U.S. leaders believed stable economies might make communist movements less appealing. This was not simply charity: American officials also wanted reliable trading partners and allies. Supporting democratic institutions overseas could serve both a political ideal and a U.S. security goal.

2. During the Cold War, that security goal sometimes outweighed the ideal. In Chile, the United States worked to weaken elected president Salvador Allende before a military coup in 1973. It then maintained ties with General Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship, which crushed political opposition. By 1988, U.S. officials backed a vote on whether Pinochet should stay in power and urged respect for its result. Chile shows how U.S. support for elections could shift when leaders judged their interests differently.

3. After the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, American officials helped fund elections, schools, and new government institutions. They argued these efforts could protect rights and prevent extremist groups from finding a base there. Yet the project depended heavily on U.S. troops and money. As those troops withdrew in 2021, the Taliban rapidly regained power and restricted political freedoms. The case raises a hard question: can outside support build democratic institutions that endure without it?

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Marshall Plan serve both a democratic ideal and a U.S. interest?

2. How did U.S. actions toward Chilean democracy differ between 1973 and 1988?

3. What does Afghanistan suggest about a limit of U.S. efforts to build democratic institutions?

4. Across these cases, did U.S. support for democracy follow one consistent approach? Use two details to explain.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a newly elected country asks the United States for help strengthening its courts and offers access to a military base. In 70 to 90 words, recommend how the United States should respond, using two cases from the passage to justify one safeguard.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one U.S. action intended to strengthen democracy in each paragraph. Circle a detail that shows a competing interest or a limit to that effort. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Marshall Plan serve both a democratic ideal and a U.S. interest?	**It supported recovery where democratic governments could grow stronger, while helping the United States gain trading partners and allies.**
2	How did U.S. actions toward Chilean democracy differ between 1973 and 1988?	**Before the 1973 coup, the United States worked to weaken an elected president. By 1988, it backed a vote on Pinochet's rule and urged respect for the result.**
3	What does Afghanistan suggest about a limit of U.S. efforts to build democratic institutions?	**Institutions that depend heavily on U.S. troops and money may not endure when that support ends.**
4	Across these cases, did U.S. support for democracy follow one consistent approach? Use two details to explain.	**No. The United States aided recovery in Western Europe, but it also maintained ties with Chile's dictatorship during the Cold War. Its methods reflected both democratic ideals and changing interests.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The United States should offer training for independent judges, but keep that aid separate from talks about the military base. The Marshall Plan suggests that outside support can strengthen democratic governments while also serving U.S. interests. Chile warns that security goals can lead officials to tolerate repression. To guard against that risk, any agreement should include public reports on court independence. Local judges should also help direct the training so the courts can continue their work after U.S. support ends.

Accept different recommendations if they evaluate the tension between democratic support and U.S. interests, use two passage cases accurately, and propose a specific safeguard. The sample response is 80 words.